



IM_

Unlock the *true* *potential* of Corporate Communication

Introducing a practical Communication Operating Model
to turn complexity into strategic business value

Corporate Communication is more critical – and more complex – than ever. And even highly skilled communication teams struggle to release the full potential of their efforts into measurable, organisation-wide value.

What holds them back is rarely a lack of talent or tools, but rather an operating gap: unclear roles and interfaces across communication disciplines, fragmented processes, organisational silos, competing KPIs, and a weak link between strategy and day-to-day execution. The good news is that an operating model for communications can help organisations transform complexity into a coherent system that delivers strategic outcomes.

In this whitepaper, we introduce a new **Communication Operating Model**. Built from our work across 900+ communication projects, this document provides practical guidance on how to begin applying the operating model in your organisation. In the following sections, we offer:

- A clear view of the dream and current challenges of Corporate Communication
- An introduction to a new Communication Operating Model that connects the directional elements of strategy, story, and stakeholders to six core dimensions of execution
- Practical key questions and best practices for each dimension
- An overview of practical steps to take to start working with the operating model

The dream of Corporate Communication

When we refer to 'Corporate Communication', we refer to an interdependent system of all internal and external communicating functions, and not just the specific functions that exist in many companies.

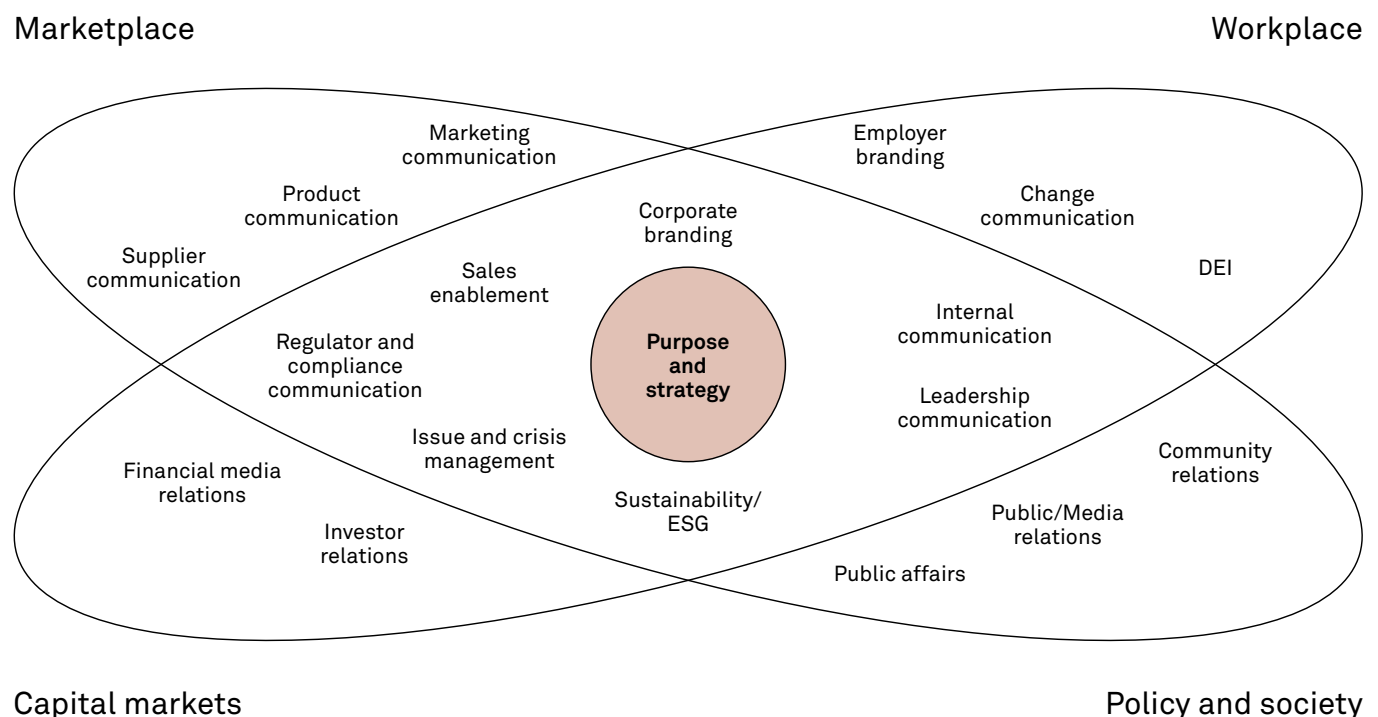
The interdependent system of Corporate Communication spans multiple disciplines, stakeholders, and arenas. The overarching goal is to help stakeholders make sense of the organisation and act in support of its purpose and strategy.

When done successfully, Corporate Communication can create immense business value for your organisation.

- When *marketing communication* resonates, customers in the marketplace will buy more, pay more, and stay loyal to your business
- When *investor communication* performs, stakeholders in capital markets will invest more, and finance on better terms
- When *public affairs and relations* are strong, stakeholders in the broader society grant you a licence to operate and place their trust in you

- When *internal change and leadership communication* is effective, employees and leaders are engaged, understand priorities, embrace change more quickly, and perform better

This is the dream, or aspiration, of Corporate Communication: all the individual communication functions and disciplines in an organisation work towards different stakeholders in the four arenas above, but all led by the enterprise-mindset idea of fulfilling the core purpose and strategy of the organisation through the sum of all the parts.



Source:
Adjusted from Alessandra Mazzei

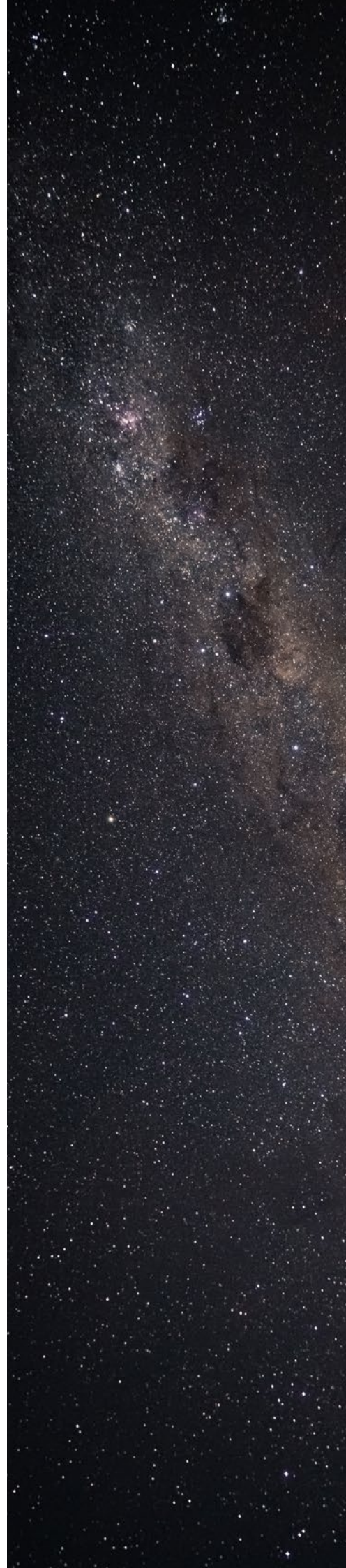
Complexity is constraining even great communication teams

The dream of Corporate Communication is, in fact, also the challenge. One thing is to do the individual communication disciplines well. Another thing is to manage all the different disciplines collectively and effectively day-to-day across all the various arenas and stakeholders.

So why does this dream of Corporate Communication too often go unfulfilled?

- In many organisations, roles and responsibilities overlap between various communication functions, teams, and individuals, with numerous disciplines operating in a grey area and requiring diverse skills to provide genuine value
- The number of processes and channels has increased, but governance and ownership continue to be unclear in many organisations
- Leaders continue to underestimate their role as key communicators and culture setters, leaving communication teams to 'fix' what must be led
- Performance is too often tracked through activity metrics, not outcomes – and linkages to business value remain weak
- Numerous stories and messages lead to confusion and inconsistency both within and outside organisations

Corporate Communication is complex by design. Treat it as disconnected sets of communication activities, and you get inefficiencies, misalignment, and missed synergies. Treat it as a system – with a clear structure – and you unlock strategic value.



Corporate Communication needs a structured operating model

To deal with the high level of complexity constraining many communication teams, we need a structured approach – a mission control centre that grounds us and brings order to chaos. Specifically, what we need is an operating model for communications that aligns ‘why’ and ‘what’ with ‘how’ across the business.

Our Communication Operating Model includes **three elements** (outer ring), that set the direction for the operating model, and **six core dimensions** (inner ring), focused on making execution work inside and across various communication disciplines.

Let us take a closer look at the Communication Operating Model, including key questions and best practices for each directional element and core dimension.

Unfolding the Communication Operating Model

The Communication Operating Model is based on insights from our experience with hundreds of communication projects. It links the directional elements of strategy, story, and stakeholders, which most organisations already have in place, with six core execution dimensions that many organisations lack.





Directional elements (outer ring)

Strategy: Align communications with business value

Key question: What impact must corporate communications deliver to advance our purpose and business strategy?

What good looks like:

- A clear impact case linking communication outcomes to strategic priorities (e.g., growth, productivity, trust, licence to operate)
- A prioritised portfolio of business-critical communication activities
- Annual planning rhythm tied to business cycles

Story: An aspirational, unifying narrative that mobilises action

Key question: What is the overall aspirational and unifying story about our organisation's role in the world?

What good looks like:

- A coherent organisational narrative – aspirational, inspirational, and explorational – that sets a direction and animates stakeholders to act

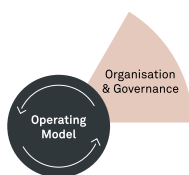
- Strategic message house and proof points
- Narrative guardrails and adaptation rules

Stakeholders: Anchor focus on what creates value – and for whom

Key question: Which stakeholder segments must corporate communications successfully understand and engage with to deliver the desired impact?

What good looks like:

- Quantitative and qualitative stakeholder insights and analysis
- A shared stakeholder map with clear segmentation and prioritisation of the most critical stakeholders
- Personas, needs/wants, moments that matter, and influence pathways for the most critical stakeholders



Core dimensions (inner ring)

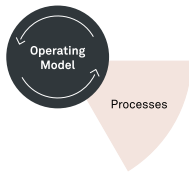
1) Organisation & Governance: Clarify roles, interfaces, and mandate

Key question: How does the optimal organisational design and governance look for integrated communications?

What good looks like:

- An organisational design that enables coherence and speed across levels, functions, and teams

- Governance model, incl. roles and responsibilities, decision mandates, and escalation paths, especially for shared disciplines (e.g. employer branding, sustainability/ESG, product launches)
- Cross-functional alignment, interfaces, and meeting structures



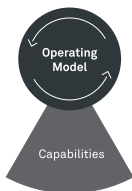
2) Processes: Build efficient and high-quality end-to-end processes

Key question: What are the core activities and processes for corporate communications that enable us to deliver value for our stakeholders?

What good looks like:

- Process mapping 'as-is' (incl. current pain points and bottlenecks)

- Process 'to-be' redesign for efficiencies and enhanced value-creation (incl. approvals, interfaces, and quality criteria)
- Implementation roadmap, standardisation, and continuous improvement of core processes

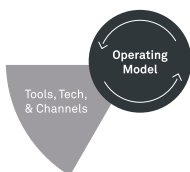


3) Capabilities: Invest where advantage is created

Key question: What are the key capabilities for corporate communications to deliver on strategy now and in the future?

What good looks like:

- Capability assessment and gaps
- Capability strategy with clear priorities on investments in upskilling, outsourcing or insourcing, and acquiring the capabilities needed
- Capability building and training

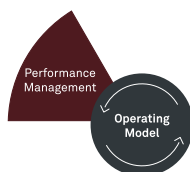


4) Tools, Tech, & Channels: Create the right mix for efficiency and impact

Key question: Which combination of tools, technologies, and channels best enables efficient operations for corporate communications?

What good looks like:

- Optimised landscape for tools, tech, and channels (incl. standardised architecture and interplay rules)
- Playbooks and best practice guidelines
- AI governance and data management enabling quality, speed, and trust



5) Performance Management: Prove and improve value creation

Key question: How can we track and measure the impact of corporate communications?

What good looks like:

- Clear impact case with a hierarchy

- of metrics and KPIs linking how communication activities create business impact
- Impact tracking (incl. integrated dashboards and monitoring)
- Performance rhythm (review cadences, e.g. monthly reviews; quarterly deep dives)



6) Leadership & Culture: Make leaders the most powerful channel

Key question: How do we cultivate the needed ownership among leaders and organisational behaviours for corporate communications to deliver value?

What good looks like:

- Behavioural principles and cultural 'rules'
- Leader communication system (incl. engagement and coaching, cadence, formats, and toolkits)
- Change management (incl. leader-led organisational empowerment and plan to embed new ways of working)

Five steps to bring the operating model to life

The operating model framework can be applied in various situations and in different ways, depending on the organisation and the scope of the problem to be solved. You may address multiple dimensions at once or start with one, work across communication functions and teams or focus on a single area, and choose to operate globally, regionally, or locally.

No matter the scope, you can put the model into practice by following five general steps:

Step 1: Mobilise

Define what your organisation wants to achieve and use this strategic aspiration to establish the overall design principles for the operating model.

Outcomes:

- Success criteria defined
- Design principles to steer design sprints
- Scope of the operating model defined

Step 2: Baseline

Ensure that the current state and all relevant business drivers are adequately understood to begin the design work.

Outcomes:

- Clarity on directional elements: Strategy, story, and stakeholders
- Baseline assessment ('as-is') of the current operating model

Step 3: Options

Answer the questions: What should your organisation be able to do to meet the strategic aspiration? What are the implications?

Outcomes:

- Overview of required target state ('to-be')
- High-level operating model options based on design principles
- Selected operating model option

Step 4: Design

Describe the selected operating model option within the defined scope and choose and detail selected dimensions.

Outcomes:

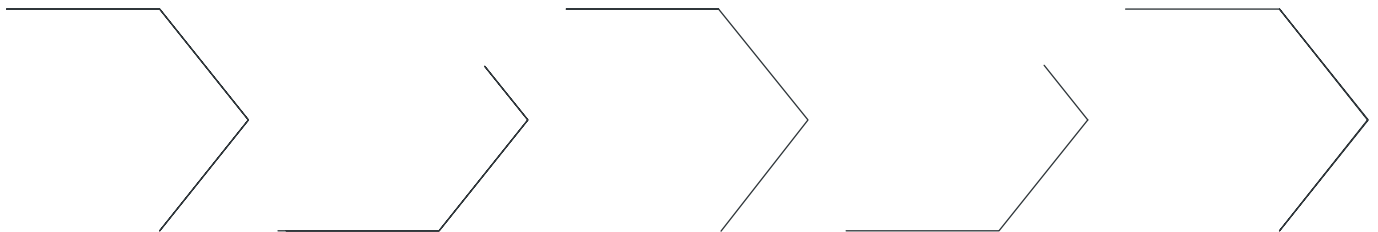
- Fully defined operating model
- Detailing of selected dimensions

Step 5: Implement

Describe how your organisation can be enabled to develop from the current state towards the new operating model.

Outcomes:

- Pilots and learning loops
- Project organisation for implementation
- Implementation roadmap





key principles for successful implementation

Our experience with operating model projects has highlighted five essential principles to help organisations de-risk and accelerate progress.

1. **Be visionary:** challenge legacy constraints; explore future-fit designs.
2. **Be hypothesis-driven:** tailor scope, test assumptions, and iterate.
3. **Design end-to-end:** optimise for business value, not sub-functions.
4. **Build sprint-based learning:** prototype, test, adapt, scale.
5. **Involve senior leadership from day one:** connect strategy and execution; secure mandate and ownership.



Conclusion

Corporate Communication becomes a true value driver when it runs as a coherent system that connects strategy, story, and stakeholders to six disciplined ways of working.

With our Communication Operating Model, you can add structure to complexity and unleash the true potential of your organisation's communications.

The organisations that move first will set the standard. Are you ready to leave the hamster wheel behind and bring the dream of Corporate Communication to life?

Want to know more?

Let's discuss how to tailor the Communication Operating Model to your organisation's context.

Troels Dahl-Nielsen

Implement Consulting Group
+45 2362 6661
trdn@implement.dk

Kathrine Kretzschmar

Implement Consulting Group
+45 3029 5894
kagr@implement.dk

Lars Hancke

Implement Consulting Group
+45 4138 0048
laha@implement.dk